



August 29, 2006

Patricia A. Maryland, Ph.D.
Chair, Citizens' Health Care Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Ave., Ste. 575
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Dr. Maryland:

On behalf of the 30,000 members of the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), I am pleased to submit comments on *the Interim Recommendations of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group* dated June 1, 2006. NATA commends the Working Group for its diligent work and broad recommendations.

Athletic trainers are state licensed or certified health care professionals who specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses. These comments are from the perspective of athletic trainers, who serve an estimated 16 million patients annually of all ages and in clinical environments ranging from hospitals, outpatient therapy clinics, U.S. Armed Forces, and high school, college and professional athletic training clinics. Athletic trainers generally work but are not limited to the fields of physical medicine and rehabilitation services, as defined by the American Medical Association.

NATA advocates for federal government policies and legislation to ensure Medicare, Medicaid and privately insured beneficiaries have ready access to high quality health care delivered by qualified health care professionals under the direction of physicians. Additionally, NATA advocates for affordable health care services that are medically appropriate and delivered by the qualified health care professional of the physician's choice.

Athletic trainers, working under their state scope of practice and the direction of a physician:

- Increase the quality of patient care and satisfaction;
- Decrease the cost to the health care system through early injury assessment and accelerated rehabilitation methods that promote quicker return to activity;
- Improve access to care because athletic trainers are well distributed throughout urban, suburban and rural areas;
- Reduce the shortage of health care workers with its 30,000 licensed or credentialed practitioners;
- Expand patient treatment options and access to health care as a frequent provider of choice of physicians;
- Utilize their first-responder specialized training to respond to national health care emergency situations.

N A T I O N A L A T H L E T I C T R A I N E R S ' A S S O C I A T I O N



N A T A

In the continuation of its work, the NATA encourages the Working Group to:

1. **Support federal government policies and reimbursement regulations that support injury and illness prevention and preventive care.** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and private industry have initiated a shift to wellness and disease prevention but much more can be done. Federal regulations that recognize and encourage injury and illness prevention and wellness services for all patient populations will reduce the financial strain on the now overburdened public and private health care systems.
2. **Encourage and adopt national health care policies and regulations that are inclusive rather than exclusive so that all qualified, credentialed health care professionals can equally participate in the delivery of health care services to patients who can benefit from their academic and clinical training.**
3. **Encourage and adopt national health care policies that work to solve the shortage of health care workers and access to health care.** Access to health care is a complex problem. Two primary factors are the shortage of qualified health care professionals and the burdensome regulations that restrict what types of health care professionals can provide which types of services. The Working Group is encouraged to recommend policies that would allow school health centers, community health centers, rural health centers and other appropriate health care facilities to receive reimbursement for services provided by all certified or licensed health care professionals.

The 30,000 practicing athletic trainers are uniquely qualified health care professionals who specialize in injury prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal conditions for people of all ages and stages of physical condition. NATA members are well suited to deliver health care and wellness services, which are crucial to ensuring access to affordable health care in the U.S.

Sincerely yours,

Eve Becker-Doyle, CAE
Executive Director